/146 cont./

In order to defend their mountain country the Paez also used large rocks which they hurled down on the attackers from the heights. They, too, however, soon succeeded in obtaining iron and iron weapons. In their battles at the time of the Conquista they were already using swords and machetes.

The stone-sling plaited of agave fibers, whose manufacture is described below (see under "Plaiting" /see pp. 85-86 /), is of great importance mythologically in the battles with the "Pijao." For geographical reasons it is the typical weapon of the American mountain peoples from Tierra del Fuego to Canada, whereas the blowgun, for similar reasons, is the typical weapon chiefly of the Amazonas and Orinoco forest area. The simultaneous occurrence of blowgun and sling is found all the way from Mexico to Ecuador and in Bolivia (Friederici, 1911, pp. 71-73, Pl. 13).

/147/ The blowgun of the Paez consists of a single barrel and is very simple in its construction. It is made only by men, but for bird-hunting is used almost solely by boys. To make it, one uses the thin, straight trunk of the fíza tree, the pith of which is burned out with a long iron tube about eight millimeters in diameter and heated red-hot. The length of the tube is two to three meters. No special mouthpiece is attached. As a sight a little piece of beeswax is pasted above the mouth of the blowgun. The ball-shaped fruits of the smbák tree, which have exactly the right caliber when green, are used as shot. The range amounts to about 20 meters. The accuracy of the shot is not great. Nevertheless, there are boys who have carved more than 20 notches above the blowhole of the tube as a record of the birds killed.

4. Crafts and Techniques

a) Treatment of Fibers

The fiber material used by the Paez for plaiting, weaving, nets, or ropes is primarily agave, cotton, or sheep wool. Agave and cotton are ancient American fiber plants whose homeland is probably Central America, while working with sheep wool has its tradition in the Peruvian Highlands, in working with llama or